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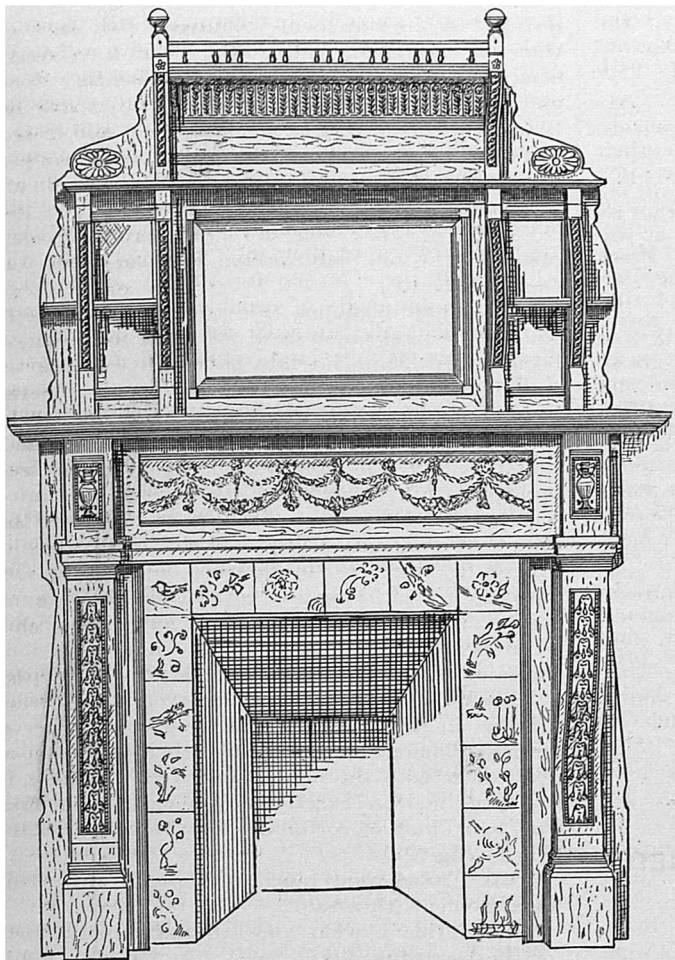
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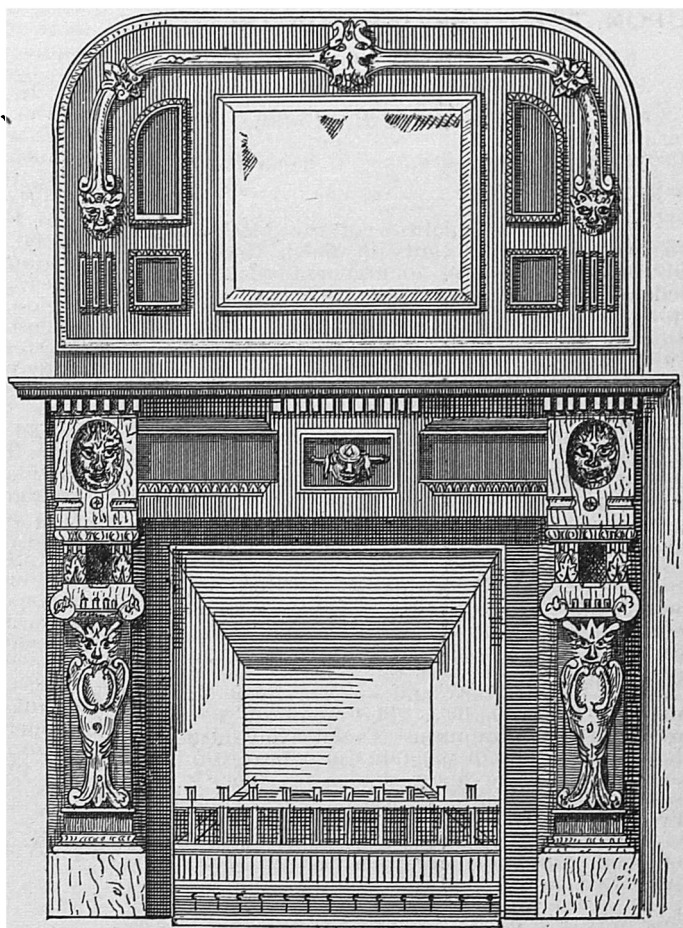


Number One.

DESIGNS FOR MANTELS.

By C. J. SOYARD.

Mantel No. 1, for a Reception Room, should be made of light-colored wood, say cherry or maple, or even pine, painted in any shades desirable to contrast well, or match the surrounding colors; the carvings, which would be costly, can be substituted by Lincrusta Walton, and at comparatively small expense; the mirror to be bevelled, and to have brass railing at top; an English iron fire-place would look well with it. No. 2, for Hall or Library, ought to be made of oak or ash, antique finish, pilaster figures to stand out very bold, the figures or medallions above in deep bas-relief; bevel mirror, and the curved top molding in full relief and boldly carved; a brick fireplace; with portable grate, would be a suitable completion.



Number Two.

OUR BOSTON LETTER.

WE see on all sides a taste for the models that are genuine clear through, perfect in outline and finish, with low tones of color that supplement almost any background. In furniture the Renaissance seems to be gaining over the coquettish Queen Anne, and one of our leading houses designs and manufactures very elaborate models of this style. The deep colors of the wood are brought out in wonderful beauty, while the elaborately carved borders rival in finish the antiquities of the museum.

In the mania for decoration there is opportunity for securing, in permanent form, many pretty souvenirs of travel. One of the most unique and useful tables for the drawing room, is made of bits of Japanese inlaid work, set into native wood in a very ingenious manner; the top of round form, bears the Japanese setting in relief, while the top is adjusted by hinges, to be turned at will, for use in the reception of trifles, or to be placed flat against the wall; the legs are studded by tiny bits of rare Japanese beauty, substantially placed in the native wood. Carved Japanese canes are used for supports in building very elaborate cabinets and ornamental chairs, upholstered in plush. A desk suitable for a morning room is of chestnut, with drawers of Japanese lacquer work; a polished top with the same work imbedded upon the exterior, while odd ornaments of the same general design are placed upon the supports, the lining is of cherry felt, and the cost of this piece is less than one would pay for an ugly uncomfortable desk, such as are made by the thousand. A very pretty fancy is to outline a favorite design, and have it etched directly upon the wood. This method is adopted by some of our larger firms, who make a speciality of order work. The present fashion of design allows scope for individual taste, and the result is seen in most picturesque and comfortable rooms. Following the Renaissance furniture we have the walls hung with tapestry of deep low tone, the ceiling treated in a substantial manner with oaken panels, that are continued along the upper portion of the wall, and arranged along the lower border with tiny hooks that receive the wall draperies; hangings that match the wall covering are draped across the windows, so arranged upon bars that the light can be excluded when necessary. It will be seen that the old fashion of shutting out air and light has quite gone past, for, despite the elaborate window ornamentation, this arrangement allows of pushing it all back from the casement when quantities of air or light are needed. Hardwood floors are universal, with the economical and popular Turkish rug thrown over the centre space. This rich adornment of heavy hangings belongs, of course, to drawing rooms, while for the lighter order of rooms, leatherette is used upon the walls; the arrangement is either in panels of contrasting color, or the wall space is divided into centre

space, frieze and dado. Following this fancy, the furniture is of lighter wood, cherry or oak, made in models that are plain in comparative outline, bearing quaint carving upon the top; the upholstery is done in leather of the finely embossed designs, that have proved very serviceable under severe test. The furnishing of houses in art form requires study and thorough knowledge, which has caused the employment of the best talent in this department. A very pleasant morning room has the walls covered by a bright scarlet material, over which is drawn a coarse meshed canvas that breaks the brightness, but the color is seen most agreeably along the walls; while a plain canvas, in the original color, is carried in wide bands along the ceiling line, and just above the base board. The windows are shrouded in Madras muslin, and the mantel is of wood, a fine specimen of curled maple. One of the most delightful and inexpensive rooms for breakfast use, can be made by leaving the walls without plaster and covering them with the bark of trees; the bark is nailed on flat from the floor to the ceiling, which is of narrow matched boards. About the base of the wall, eighteen inches from the border, is constructed a railing of plain polished wood. The enclosure thus made is covered with tin upon the floor and the space filled with earth, in which are placed growing plants. Ivy can be trained upon the rough bark that covers the walls with good effect. This model comes from England, and the freshness and beauty of such a room repays the time and care demanded for procuring the bark, which must be well selected and dried before putting on. Some of our best architects have adopted a pleasant way of gaining practical plans for building houses. They call upon the ladies of a family, when building is under consideration, and from them gain an intimate knowledge of what they desire. All interior arrangements are planned with that close, careful calculation in regard to detail that ladies understand so well, and then the plans and specifications follow readily in the general way. By following this, many novel and useful additions are introduced, and the perplexing question of where to put closets and stairs, is settled by the ones who care most about them. The irregular exterior of houses, which seems to develop very rapidly in all directions at present, is due in a large measure to this grouping of interiors to suit individual taste, adding the outer finish as occasion demands. The introduction of stained glass is also a great gain, for many rooms which need light are better suited to their purpose, if flooded with a light that is softened by a touch of color. The Boston artisan does not sacrifice durability and strength to mere beauty, but rather studies to unite these qualities in substantial form and pleasing combination. That he is successful, is proven from the fact that large orders which formerly went abroad from New York, Chicago and Philadelphia, now come here for execution from original designs made by our home firms and native artists. One of the largest manufacturing establishments in the world is located in

this city, and the enormous stock turned out every week is wonderful in its quiet and delicate finish. These goods are shipped in large quantities to Europe, Australia, South America and the Sandwich Islands.

One of our oldest furniture houses reproduces exact models of furniture used centuries ago; the senior partner has spent many years in Europe picking up rare and beautiful novelties, that have been reproduced in such perfection that it is hard to tell the model from the newer antique, that lends such exquisite tone to any room. Boston taste is conservative, and the bits of old time furnishing that are crowding the frail, delicate beauty of the "spindle legged golden chairs" era, are better suited to the life and homes of a people that have, beneath the dazzle and shine of society life, a deep strata of sound common sense. The beauty of the present is founded upon principle applied to systematic action, thereby securing a permanent form. After one hundred years, we turn back to the old homes, and even favor the straightback chairs, which never produced round shoulders, but stood, a daily protest against any dream of fashionable attitude that one is forced into by Queen Anne chairs and other passing fancies. The newest chairs, and, in fact, the standard furniture, is made with square backs, slightly adjusted to the contour of the body; carving in durable form is upon the surface, or the delicate etching, that has become so popular on account of its diversity, and beauty, and comparatively inexpensive value.

Probably there is nothing about the house so cheery and healthful as the open fire place. The modern arrangement unites beauty, durability and cleanliness. A mantel of tile is of low tone, presenting a harmony of contrast or carrying out tones of a single color; the form can be made to suit any fancy or any space, while the floor and hearth are made of the same clear-cut, perfect tile that will endure heat, cold and atmospheric effect without change. Mantels of this design are softer than marble, less expensive and more artistic, carrying out the key note of color in a room. One of the finest bath rooms ever fitted in this city had a floor, wall and ceiling of tiles in blue and gray tints, the bath frame was of delicate blue with border of gray, and the wash-stand, a durable and dainty affair of gray with touches of blue. A corner mantel and fireplace is also very effective if made with tiles; the uniform size and perfect finish, with the exquisite design, render them very pleasing. Our American homes are beautiful with the wealth that belongs to our own country. Imported ideas are touched with individual life here, that often returns to the Old World as a revelation of beauty.

Mr. John A. Pray, of Messrs. John H. Pray, Sons & Co., has sailed for Europe, to scour the Continent for new ideas in carpets.

The touch of genius can confer beauty upon the meanest things.—Prof. George Wilson.